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NSC BRIEFING

28 February 1956

POST-ELECTION GREECE

- I. Prime Minister Karamanlis' election squeak-through (19 Feb) gives him narrow majority control of new parliament. However, seats won by leftist candidates mean that new parliament will also be scene of Communist-inspired activities.
 - A. Although it polled only 46% of popular vote, Karamanlis' own party, the "National Radical Union" (ERE), won 163 of total 300 seats.
 - B. "Popular Front" coalition of Center and Left Parties, temporarily established for election campaign purposes, got 54% of popular vote.
 1. However, "Front" has now dissolved, and leaders of Center parties, which won about 84 seats, have announced support for Karamanlis on foreign policy.
 2. On domestic issues, however, Center parties will seek to embarrass government, promote new elections.
- II. Successes by the Left Parties of the "Front", in turn, have given Communist-influenced groups the largest bloc in parliament in Greek history (44 seats).
 - A. Communist-front United Democratic Left (EDA) got 18 seats, fellow-travelling Democratic Party (DKEL) 20, and Democratic Initiative Movement, 6.
 - B. For first time since 1947, Communists have gained some respectability and a forum from which to harrass the government.

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III. Armed with parliamentary majority, Karamanlis' new government intends to tackle Greece's pressing domestic and foreign problems. However, Karamanlis anticipates his government will fall in about six months.

A. Any hard-hitting program of social reform will antagonize powerful vested interests, who could cause defection of enough ERE deputies (14 would be sufficient) to bring down Government.

B. However, Karamanlis believes that failure to push reforms would also bring about his fall.

C. He says he will go down fighting, probably in hope that his record will attract greater popular support in ^{NEXT} elections.

IV. Narrow margin of ERE victory (old Rally, for example, had 239 seats) guarantees continuing political pressure for new recourse to polls.

A. New government will almost certainly fall well before completion of statutory four-year term: perhaps in 6 to 18 months.

B. Thus, Greek political activity in immediate future will probably be geared to expectation of new election campaign.

1. All political leaders, including Karamanlis, will hope to benefit from new elections.

2. Karamanlis government, therefore, is not likely to produce significant results.

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